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Notes of the Month.

The Colleges and the New General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

The Session 1927-28 at the Unitarian College, Manchester, was brought to a close on Tuesday, July 3rd, when the President, Mr. F. W. Monks, was in the Chair, supported by a distinguished company. There was also a large attendance of the general public. As this College has been from the beginning responsible for the theological training of a large number of the ministers of our Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, the speech of the Principal, the Rev. H. M'Lachland, M.A., D.D., will be of interest to members of our Church. The speech was a timely reminder of the relation of the College to the newly-formed General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in which he defined the position of the College to that organisation. He recalled the fact that the College had been affiliated to the National Conference from its foundation; that it had approved its union with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and that it desired to co-operate in every possible way with the new General Assembly. He drew attention to a fact—not always sufficiently recognised—that the students of the College come to it from the Churches now enrolled in the General Assembly, and trusted that they would go from the College into the service of the said churches. In view of this he did not "believe that this practice stamps the College as a narrow and dogmatic training school for the Ministry, since the churches in question are not in themselves illiberal or dogmatic." He instanced the Preamble to the constitution of the College in proof of this which states: "The institution adheres to the principle of freely imparting theological knowledge without insisting on the adoption of particular theological doctrines." He did not understand this statement to mean that "no doctrinal instruction is permissible" within the College walls. He rightly insisted on the fact that Teaching is the object of the institution and must necessarily be done as its chief aim; but insisting on the adoption of any particular theological doctrine is quite another thing and beyond the scope of the College. The principle followed at the College is the same as is recognised at the University. What a Theological College requires is that the "students should know the origin and history of dogma and doctrines and what may be said for and against them, but no question is asked in any such a form as to call for an expression of personal religious belief." Dr. M'Lachlan revealed the ruling idea which has always characterised our churches when he said: "Anxious above all else to reveal the core of truth in all systems of theology that have won the allegiance of all good men and true in every age, there is no obligation upon us to refrain from exposing error, wherever, in the light of our present knowledge, it may be discovered." Reverting to the Constitution of the College he said, "Nor does the Preamble named conflict in any way with the view that the College stands in a certain intimate relation with a certain group of churches, for these churches recognise the open principle,, and impose no doctrinal tests of membership"; but the Principal added a much needed proviso—which it would be well for all our church connections to note—that "the statement (of the Preamble) does not imply that a student who declares his intention to subscribe articles or confession has any claim to our benefactions. He has no longer the open mind and the liberal principles requisite to the due weighing of the evidence presented. He has returned his verdict without listening to the witnesses." We are grateful to Dr. M'Lachlan for so clear and precise a statement of the connection of the College

of which he is Principal with the group of Churches which the institution has served so well and faithfully in the past, and will, we trust, serve them in a more eminent degree in times yet to come. His concluding remarks will commend themselves to all Non-Subscribing Christians when he says, "We shall therefore continue to labour in the service of Truth, Liberty and Religion as God has given us understading of those great words, in close association with that group of free churches in this country which has striven in season and out of season to express them in their life and teaching.". These are deliberate words and well chosen to suit the situation as it has lately arisen. The Non-Subscribing Church in Ireland need have no fear of entrusting the education of their students for the ministry to an institution which so thoroughly safeguards. liberty of personal religion to any theological student entrusted to its training.

"Back to Realities."

We desire to draw the attention of our readers to a review we publish this month furnished by one of our able ministers whose initials will be readily recognised. It is a book by Dr. Mellone well-known to members of our Congregations in the North of Ireland and deals with the unrest which is apparent in the religious world of to-day. It is entitled, "Back to Realities: a way out of the Present Chaos in Religion" and published by Constable & Company. We commend the book to our readers with confidence in that it sums up in succinct fashion the confused attitude to religious faith present in the world to-day. Dr. Mellone's standing as an observer of the trend in religious matters needs no commendation and is well-known in many quarters. We believe that he gauges the situation in this booklet in a manner that will concentrate our readers' ideas on the subject. We ask readers to turn to the review of the book by R.N.C. and having done so to procure the book which we venture to believe will be worth their while. One slight criticism we would make—also noticed by our reviewer—namely, we wish Dr. Mellone would have given more of his own observations and fewer quotations from religious leaders. We believe that Dr. Mellone's own conclusions are vastly more important to the world at large under modern circumstances: but with his usual modesty he is desirous of carrying along with him far-seeing observers who like himself are pining for reality in religious truth. Those of our readers who are anxious to have a nearer view of a lucid account of the situation in the religious world of our day can do no better than take Dr. Mellone's book as their guide. In our opinion he will inevitably lead them to the conclusion to which our fathers in the faith have been pointing for many a long day past. Copies of the booklet may be had, price 2/- net, from Mr. Gilliland, at the Depository, 35 Rosemary Street, Belfast.

A Personal Note.

Much sympathy and all good wishes for a speedy recovery will be extended to the Rev. J. A. Kelly, throughout our whole Church connection in that a serious breakdown in health has recently overtaken him. While we trust and believe that an enforced rest from exertion of any kind will only be temporary, a serious heart trouble entailing complete rest compels him to lie on his back in bed. Friends and correspondents. will please note that for the next six weeks or possibly two months he is forbidden to write or to exert and so to excite himself in any way. It is good to know that he is in excellent spirits and protests that there is nothing wrong with him except the muscles of his heart; but his long service in the Christian ministry ranging, if we mistake not, for 47 years is a record that behoves him to be careful of his health in the future. His strenuous activities for a long term of years have inured him to a busy life, and, no doubt, he finds it hard to realise that years do indeed make a difference. The advice of his friends will surely be, let him not be so energetic in the future as he has been in the past.

Ordination Service.

First Presbyterian Church, Belfast.

New Minister Welcomed.

The Rev. R. Nicol Cross, M.A., of Hampstead, was ordained on June 21st, to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church, Rosemary Street, Belfast, in the presence of a large congregation. The Moderator of Antrim Presbytery (the Rev. A. M. Bell, Ballyclare) conducted the ordination service, and the Rev. V. A. Callow (Downpatrick) preached the sermon, while the Rev. W. H. T. Tilson (Greyabbey) expounded the principles of Presbyterian church government. The Moderator put the prescribed questions, and they were satisfactorily answered by Mr. Cross.

The Chairman of the Church Committee, Mr. Bowman Malcolm, affirmed the in-

tention of the congregation to have Mr. Nicol Cross as their minister, and the ceremony of the laying on of hands was then performed, the ordination prayer being offered by the Rev. John Begg (Larne). The charge was delivered by Rev. F. Lockett (Holywood).

Mr. Bowman Malcolm, chairman of the Church Committee, presided at the luncheon in the Central Hall, Rosemary Street, and there was a large attendance.

The Chairman proposed the toast of "The Governor of Northern Ireland and the Northern Parliament," and Mr. William Grant, M.P., in replying, said the appointment of the Duke of Abercorn as Governor was popular with all creeds and classes, and the Duchess of Abercorn associated herself with every good work.

The Rev. R. Nicol Cross, who was cordially greeted when he rose to reply to the toast of his health, referred to the fact that ministers of sister churches had been present to welcome him. He said it was a tradition of the denomination to which they belonged to cherish friendly relations with other branches of the Church of Christ. They differed in some respects from other religious bodies, but it took all kinds of men to make a world.

The Rev. J. A. Kelly (Dunmurry) proposed the sentiment of the Antrim Presbytery, and it was acknowledged by the Rev. A. O. Ashwood, clerk to the Presbytery, who referred to differences in the Irish Presbyterian Church, and said the day was coming when the demand for subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith would be a thing of the past.

The toast of the guests was proposed by Mrs. Hume, O.B.E., and Rev. R. W. Seaver, M.A., B.D. (St. John's, Malone), in responding, said he would like to know why there were so many churches. He thought they should drop their theology and exalt their religion. He hoped the day would come when there would be one great Church in Belfast.

Rev. J. Fraser-Hurst (Elmwood Presbyterian Church) said that no individual or church possesed a monopoly of truth, and it was only as they had the same spirit of charity and brotherliness that they could do anything worth while. In the essential things he thought there was very little difference between the various sections of the Christian Church.

Reception to Mr. and Mrs. Cross.

A reception was held in the evening in the Central Hall to meet Rev. R. Nicol Cross and Mrs. Cross, when there was a large gathering of members of the congregation and friends. After tea, the chair was taken by Mr. Bowman Malcolm, who extended a cordial welcome to the new minister and his wife.

Rev. W. C. Hall (Southport) conveyed greetings from his congregation, and Rev. Glynn Davies (Comber), on behalf of the Non-Subscribing ministers of Northern Ierland, also welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Cross to Belfast.

The ladies of the congregation presented Mr. Cross with a handsome silk gown, the gift being conveyed by Mrs. Malcolm, and a box of handkerchiefs was given to Mrs. Cross, the presentation being made by Miss Porter.

Rev. R. Nicol Cross suitably acknowledged the gifts.

On the motion of Mr. R. M. Laird, seconded by Mr. Robert M'Crum, a warm vote of thanks was passed to the Rev. S. P. Whitehouse, who had acted as minister-in-charge during the vacancy.

An enjoyable musical programme was contributed by well-known local artistes, with Miss Violet Curran, L.R.A.M., and Mr. Taylor, L.R.A.M., playing the accompaniments. A vote of thanks was also extended to them for their kindness.

The catering for the luncheon was efficiently carried out by the Ulster Menu Co., Ltd., the decorations of the hall being highly artistic.

The Revision of Christian Theology.

By the Rev. William C. Hall, M.A., of Southport, being the Annual Lecture.

When I told a friend that in response to the invitation with which you had honoured me I had chosen to address you on "The Revision of Christian Theology," he said: "You have chosen a great subject; and it is true that Christian theology needs revision." The greatness of the subject would itself be my apology for its inadequate treatment in a lecture of less than an hour, were I not, moreover, conscious of the limits of my qualification to undertake the discussion on which I am bound. I come to you, not as an expert in theology, but simply as a minister of religion who in the demands made upon him in his preaching to present Christian truth as he is compelled to reflect it discovers in the minds of others modifications of conviction and variations in his own. So that the subject for him becomes established: he recognises that the

content of his teaching requires continuous revision. By revision I mean, first, what the word primarily signifies, the seeing again, the fresh observation, the original reflection, that is, the reflection as from its source, of what one has to teach, and, secondly, what follows from such reflection, the revisal, the correction, modification, or expansion of that teaching.

First let me say that revision in the first meaning is not the easy thing it would seem to be. Whilst one is, so to speak, in a belief, which in a thousand ways, in every path of outlook, gathers new thought and emotion, it is difficult to comprehend it and to define it; and this will be the justification of those who refuse subscription to specific creeds: they will find, for example, their belief in God continuously so expanding as to prohibit its inclusion in the outlines of a set terminology. So it may be good exercise for us sometimes to assume in our private thinking—not, however, in our public utterances—that we do not believe what we profess, in order that we may clearly see the opposites against which we are always virtually contending, and that we may better understand what we set forth. It may be stated as a fact that what we profess we came to believe not after its exhaustive examination and full comprehension, not because the faculties in us that reason had made a complete penetration of some truth and scrutinized and encompassed all the grounds of it; but largely because we had a temperamental disposition to it,—or, if the word 'temperamental' suggests too much on our side and gives no hint of the power of a truth to reveal itself, let us say spiritual. For we have come to realise that whatever the dry intellect may do—and this we have some ability to measure—what we come to believe, and according to the intensity of our belief to set forth as truth, is determined, to an extent we are unable to measure, by our basic emotions, by the passions that sway us, often moving us out of ourselves, as their function is, and always moving us in some new direction. We embrace a new truth not so much because we have looked upon it with a critical eye and found it to be all it seems as because we have instinctively come to love it: we move to it because it has moved us. So is there need sometimes to haul ourselves over, to think of the opposites of what we believe, and of the objections to it, lest through the emotion that follows belief we lose the real content of our belief, and profess God without any distinct experience of him, Christ without any knowledge of him, immortality without any sense of it, and a thousand things without any apprehension of them.

But, supposing that we have beliefs well established on thought and consistent as a theology, not likely to be disturbed by our emotional accessions and reactions, let us ask what revision these may undergo as we bring them before our mind for reflection. What will happen in the calm hour. We shall find ourselves judging them by our enlarged experience of life and by our increased knowledge; and we shall find that their contents are greater or less than when we first believed. The belief in God, for instance, will be found to have in it more or less than before; the statement "I believe in God" will represent our first belief with what experience and knowledge have added or rejected.

To-day more than ever a man's beliefs are affected by his contact with the world and by what beyond his direct experience he learns of the world through the teachings of science. Every one of us inherits a world which through the application of practical science and the extensions of scientific theory is different from that of our forefathers. There has been effected for us an accommodation to the truths of Copernicus and his followers which sets us off on our thinking with a mind into which the idea of the centrality of the earth cannot enter, and we are adrift in a world which more and more compels us to wonder why we are in it at all. Again, we have assimilated the doctrine of evolution almost as we take the air. Most of us have found it vital and refreshing; some may be a little doubtful of its qualities; but it is breath of our thinking. Greater, however, if not more obvious—and it less obvious—in the shaping of our beliefs than the work of Copernicus and Darwin is the work of experts in the various sciences, the accumulation of whose discoveries, with their application, is changing our conception of the world—the conception which is, of course, the basic idea of our theology. We have to reflect that not only does Einstein's theory, which the overwhelming majority of us has to accept without any pretensions of understanding it, change the world in human thought, but that every boy who experiments in wireless is touching with his hands, his senses, and his mind new realms more wonderful than the land Columbus saw, or the ocean Cortez stared at, whilst

"all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise."

The world of Genesis has swum out of our ken; into it has come a world of which we have learnt much, and of which it may be said that we are day by day learning immeasurably more.

We have, then, left far behind the Mosaic cosmogony. Upon this was constructed the theology of Judaism, to which, I believe, the religious thought of the ancient Jews rigidly adhered. Now, Christianity may be regarded either as a development of Judaism or as a revolt from it—the true view probably is that it was both—but however we regard it, we realise that until quite recent times the old cosmogony was the basis or background of its theology. Many of us, including not a few who think that our youth has not yet gone, are old enough to recall how in popular preaching the kingdom of God was comfortably located in the world of Genesis, not too far beyond the firmament for God to look through and see us, not too far for him, when in his wrath, to reach us speedily. God was then transcendent, although his transcendence was thought of simply as a measure beyond our senses; he was not immanent. This meant that there was a differentiation of God from the world which the scientific thought of to-day, so far as it comes into alliance with the metaphysics of religion, will not admit, and which the religious philosophy we call theistic monism necessarily rejects. So long as the idea of the transcendence, the separateness, of God was maintained, there was no great difficulty in thinking of his creative art, nor of his governance of his creation; but with the coming of the idea—or shall I say, with the discovery?—of his immanence, with the thought of him as a permeation of the world, even as its integral spirit, matters are not so easy. The idea fits the doctrine, the fact, of evolution, but evolution has nothing to say about origins, and I for one want to know about origins—I am interested still in theories of creation. Is there no simple way of thinking, in which whilst we believe in immanence, we can believe also in transcendence and hold our belief as giving us a thought of God in which we see him as the Creator, who was before the world, and who still could be if the world were not, powerful to call into being with his thought and word whatsoever worlds he willed. I believe there is. We can think of God in relation to the world as we know the sun to be in relation to the earth. The sun, out of which the earth came, is transcendent over it, and this transcendence is the condition of all its life. It is also immanent in it, for what is its permeating light but matter of it; and the earth is still of the sun. But there is the separateness; whatever the intervening action and reaction, the greater body transcends the less. In the same way may not God, while he is immanent in the world, transcend it, and be working upon it as well as within it. May he not be not only in what we call nature, but without it. May he not be above it, and in opposition to it. Nature in my thinking is not God, but only something with which God deals. This he made but has not completed and perfected. So we have both creation and evolution, evolution being the continuing action of creation. If evolution, which has brought us to the idea of immanence, be this, our reference to the origin of the act discovers God in his transcendence.

We are learning to-day that by the holiness of God is meant more than his perfectly moral will and complete goodness: that it embraces the old idea of his separateness. The conviction of God may come to us as we contemplate the uniformity of nature, or we may be left simply with our view of the general order of things; it may come to us as we find imposed on human nature moral laws, which do not seem to hold much sway elsewhere on earth, or we may be left simply speculating on our higher life and destiny; it may come to us when our soul climbs beyond sense and its regulations to some vision in which the mind is ecstatic, or we may be left simply in day-dreams and hallucinations. But it comes surely to us when we become aware, after some long discipline or in that suddenness of the soul's instruction which we call conversion, that something is presented to us besides the world.

So my mind moves from theistic monism, for which the other name is pantheism, to a dualistic view in which, however God be seen to co-exist with his creation, he is primarily and especially regarded as transcending it, as existing above and beyond, as being separate from, the world; and I have argued to this, as briefly as I might, in order to maintain that while the conception of the immanence of God has, as we know, largely re-shaped Christian theology there is in the idea of transcendence that which, when further expounded, can effect their greater modification and expansion. I would ask whether immanance gives us more than natural law. I would further ask whether it is not from the transcendence of God that we get moral law, law which is imposed not on the vegetable kingdom, nor on all the animal, but only on those beings who group themselves not by instinct

but by self-conscious intelligence, who alone can have apprehension of any law. The stress we have laid on the immanence of God, our identification of him with natural law, and most of our thought of God in nature, when perhaps we ought to have been thinking rather of nature in God, have not seldom brought us perilously near to regarding and discussing God as a scientific proposition, a being about whose very existence we could argue in scientific terms pro and con. We have thought of God too exclusively in the terms of physical science.

But when we come face to face with our own monotheism what have we? When we say that the personality of God is simply one; that it is simplex, not triplex; not triune, but integrally one, what do we mean? That God is one, and not two or three, as it were, arithmetically? Or that he is one as being the unity of all things? We mean more. The doctrine of the oneness of God is primarily a moral, not a metaphysical doctrine; it is the summary of moral truth concerning God; it is the statement that God is moral reality. I will be more explicit in a moment.

My belief is that the transcendent God has already imposed on us moral law and will impose it on all his creation—is indeed now imposing it, —and that every doctrine of his personality that does not reveal his moral character will eventually fade away and be no more. I believe that the doctrine of the Trinity is passing because, as it is expounded in the Nicene Creed, it has a moral content too slight either to ensure or to justify its survival.

I have said that our doctrine is a moral one. This will be seen as we trace its origins and mark its development. It is a doctrine not deduced from scientific data, but derived from the revelation of God to men whose souls had the spiritual capacity to see his manifestations, to read his will, and to hear and catch the word that made them his prophets. Whether we are to translate the first word for God in Genesis from its plural into the singular is not a matter of any importance. We know that we open our Bible on polytheism. We know too that polytheism prevails through and after the time of Moses—that all he could do was to bring his people to the supreme recognition of Jehovah over and above the gods of the people round about. We know too that the God of Moses was a tribal deity, and that this tribal deity is the God we read about in most of the historical matter of the Old Testament and in very many of the Psalms. But we come to the prophets of the eighth century, first to Amos, and in his mind and theirs we find the thought of God as more than the Lord of the hosts of Israel, as God of more than Israel, who has ceased to be a God jealous of his powerful rivals and who is more than mighty; we come upon a God who no longer can be subjected to the criticism and reproach of man, and against whom there can be no murmuring; we come to the thought of God as just, the supreme embodiment of all that is meant by judgment, just in all his relations with his people, and requiring from them the exercise of justice to one another. He will have justice personally to and from every one of his people, and he will have social justice,—the thing on which still to-day we are labouring, not perhaps because we recognise him as we might, finding his commandments for our social reforms, but because we see the necessity of fashioning a decent human world. The God of Amos may be a God who inspires fear, even terror, and not love, but in him is found the moral commandment which is the first spiritual summons to his worship. But when we turn from Amos to Hosea, we pass to the conception of the mercy of God, from his rigid justice to his soft, considerate, and pitiful love. It is enough here to state the fact. Then we note in the teaching of Isaiah how justice and mercy have come together, how the two things separately taught by the two prophets have embraced, and how the issue is the doctrine of the holiness of God, of his complete goodness and perfectly moral will—the will which, to use the language of Kant, is good without qualification, and through which God is exclusively God. Here, of course, is the idea of transcendence, about which I shall have another word to say; but what we have here to recognise is the commonplace of our own theology, as we consider its development: that through the justice, love, and holiness of God we realise his oneness. If we want a doctrine of the Trinity we shall find it not in the metaphysics but in the ethics of Christian theology.

If so, then, we come to our monotheism, it is a monotheism which is not sufficiently stated when we say God is one, as against the metaphysical mystery of the Trinitarians. We do not adequately state it until we expound and expose its moral content, until our confession of the one God makes us feel in all our worship his justice, love, and holiness, and until in all our teaching we get these qualities of God impressed on other minds.

But first let us get them impressed on our own. We have to consider the implications of our doctrine. If in the conception of the justice of God there is involved the idea of social justice, our recognition of God must carry with it the conviction of our duty in matters of social reform. We cannot look upon the face of the perfect God without looking upon the face of our imperfect human world in its social systems, without seeing its oppressive and narrowing inequalities, its inequitable distributions of good, its pitiful limitations of human opportunity. We know what men would attempt to-day out of sheer humanity, what in this and every other city of the earth they would do for the poor out of that kindness which is grace in every heart of man; but besides this humanitarian passion there is needed, whilst we think of the City of God as well as the city of Belfast, and of the Kingdom of God as well as the kingdoms of the world, the sense of social duty which comes to us with commandments as we look upon and into the personality of God. We are proud to be able to assert that this sense of social duty has been in the lives of many of our fellowship, who have the world's praise. The need is that it be extended and deepened among us and that we make plain that it is of our religion, of a humanity that has not been left to itself for its expressions but has been prompted to human service by its knowledge of God, who calls us to be just as he is just.

Ruskin has said much to us about justice as fundamental to charity, and one would be tempted to quote him at length if our discussion were on the social problem. I mention him only because he represents in social terms what we find in theological terms as we pass to the idea of God found in Hosea. Here we have the beginnings of the true idea of the Fatherhood of God. Here the thought of him as a tribal deity is being dropped. Here his justice has melted into mercy and become unwavering and all-forgiving love. It is beautiful to contemplate him as Father, our Father; but that is not the point. When we come to belief in the Fatherhood of God, we come not only to that which can comfort us but to what should humiliate us to utter prostration of prayer. For the implication of the doctrine, and the realisation of the truth, is that we must become merciful and loving as God. God is Father to us, not simply that we may feel his love, but that we may have his love to give it to all our kind. Jesus knew that there was a second commandment like unto the first great commandment of the law, not really second, and not only like, but the same.

Much as we Unitarians have stressed the doctrines of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, it has long been borne in my mind that the great doctrine of Christianity must be, as it was that of Jesus himself, that of the Kingdom of God and its coming. I find this in the idea of God as the abolutely good will. I cannot think of his unlimited benevolence and complete goodness, of his holiness, transcendently moral, without believing that this binds me in the obligation first of all to seek his kingdom and his righteousness, the holiness which is yet beyond me, and to labour for its coming into the world.

Now, the holiness of God, while it comes to us as he wills it and as we seek it, is yet that by which he is separated from us; he is transcendent over the world by reason of it. It differentiates him from the world. And it is because this fact, as well as the other facts with which we have dealt, was realised in the development of prophecy that monotheism was the established faith of the Jews before the time of Jesus, that he knew God's Fatherhood and prepared men for the coming of the Kingdom, and that we are monotheistic in the direct line of tradition. But this has to be emphasised, that we are true monotheists, not as we simply say that we believe in only one God, but as we realise the moral content of our belief, and as we accept the implications of our doctrine, basing our conduct upon them and expressing them in the teaching of our churches.

It is in common talk to-day that Christianity needs fundamental re-thinking. This is needed, not only that the minds of men may get away from its accretions but also that they may get to its basic truths. I want to suggest a method for this re-thinking, to find, as it were, a new angle, which, however, may be shown to be an old one. Trinitarianism speaks of three persons or personalities which in its modern tongues it often represents as aspects of deity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It may be said that orthodoxy has emphasised the doctrine of the second person—that is, orthodox Protestantism, for I think Roman Catholicism has laid the emphasis elsewhere, outside the Trinity. It has been said of Unitarians that their exclusive regard of God as the Father has preserved, even for orthodoxy itself, the truth of the Fatherhood of God as represented by Jesus. But it must be said that no great thought has been given to God as the Holy Spirit. I

believe that what is needed to-day is such thought of God as the Holy Spirit as will tend and help to define him as such.

The dualism to which I have committed myself enables me to see God outside the area of physical science, independently of scientific data, and certainly beyond the range of law with which science at present deals.

I will say nothing about creation, which one may be compelled to think of in physical terms; but I will say that however we may have to think of the spirit of God in its primal act, I for one have to think of him in his shaping of the world, even as in his fashioning of the soul of man, as operating—I will even say, labouring—with the holiness of his spirit. I conceive of him as putting forth his effort against an opposite, the effort of making holy what he has physically made. I conceive of him as having made the wood, the *hyle*, the matter of the world, and as now, like a carver who shapes his material to beauty until it is the beauty and not the wood we see, shaping it to holiness. And as I must see the carver, after I have seen his work, not as a body with strength and tools and skilful hands, but as an artistic mind, so looking on the work of God I see him as the Holy Spirit.

There are some who take a view like this who are brought to think of God as finite. Mr. H. G. Wells is among them, and speaks of his finite God as the Invisible King. The description follows strangely from the thought. I mention the matter because Mr. Wells is unquestionably a destructive and constructive agent in present-day thinking, and because his theological excursions have carried a good number of people, especially thoughtful young people, with him, some distance. There is something alluring in the attempt to get God out of the infinite, out of his immeasurability,—out of the negative term,—and to bring him to the finite, to the positive, the definite; but after this, according to the reduction, one would expect him to be visible,—especially as it seems that Mr. Wells does not rid his mind of the idea of a physical God. But there is no reason for thinking of God the Holy Spirit as finite. He would be finite, and more and more limited, if he were failing in his operations, if in his shaping of the world he were being incessantly baffled, if he were making a blundering quest toward the perfection of things; but if it were so with him, even while as finite he might be seen, he would not be known as God.

But I have advanced a doctrine which I believe covers the facts of our observation and experience. The idea that evil has no positiveness, that it is simply the not-being of good, or that it is a phase of something which temporarily seems not good, is not one that easily reconciles itself in our minds, because it contradicts what we directly observe and certainly does not mollify or console us in what we increasingly experience as evil. To say that it is merely a perceived privation of good, as was popular a few years ago, is to think of a vacuum in the world, a place where, of course, the devil is not; but it is also to suppose a place where God is not. Abandoning the idea, we are not driven to think of God and devil in antagonism over the world and the soul of man, pitted against each other in dubious battle, but we shall think of God, still in the shaping of his world, as confronted with an opposite which to us is known as positive evil, that which is evil towards us and towards many of the other creatures of God, and that which is sin in our hearts. It may be in the present order of nature, in evolution at this stage, that the law of survival must involve the sacrifice of many lives for the sake of a few, a blood-sacrifice which in the lower reaches of life is appalling; but are we compelled to assume that this universal law is an eternal law? May we not believe, can it not be shown, that this law undergoes modification in the process of evolution, and that that gradually comes to be which more and more meets our moral sense? If so, God in his opposition to positive evil is converting the world to positive and absolute good.

It is in the light of this doctrine, here only crudely suggested, not finely elaborated, that I see the revision and reconstruction of Christian theology. It is the doctrine that needs emphatic proclamation, by reason of its moral content; and I think of a Church, built upon it, as we say, whose business is to expound and deliver it, which, dropping all the sectarian names by which churches are known, and perhaps eventually making the term Christian wide enough to embrace all religious faith, will call itself simply the Church of the Holy Spirit.

Mark how this doctrine can be regarded as the basis, the substance of the doctrines we think of as essential and primary in Christianity. The supreme doctrine, that of the Kingdom of God and its coming, with its assertion of his sovereignty, sway, and victory over all the powers of evil obviously in it finds its proof. It elevates the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God from what

may be little more than human terms to spiritual terms, and helps us to understand how in the Fourth Gospel the Father is described as spirit. It enables us to regard the brotherhood of man as more than the solidarity of the race, more than consanguinity, more than that sense of fellowship which urges any man to say, " I am a man, and nothing human is alien to me " : for it makes brotherhood a spiritual fact. It represents immortality as possible here and now, for what is immortality but experience of the Holy Spirit ; and it prompts in us the conviction of life hereafter, without our resorting to scientific evidence or spiritualistic experiment. Sooner or later science may prove human survival, or it may disprove it—it may leave no atom of evidence in its favour ; but on some parallel line of investigation which science, as ordinarily we think of it, may never be able to touch it may be demonstrated. Now, however, I contend that if there is any truth in the idea that the Holy Spirit, the Father, in whom we are sons, is developing our self-consciousness into the likeness of his own, we have the spiritual proof already.

But while this doctrine can enhance in spirituality what we commonly profess, it is especially of value as it gives us a better definition of salvation. I see in many of our buildings a printed statement of " Our Faith " in which it is declared that we believe salvation is by character. It reminds me of an old hymn of ours, " Man, work out thine own salvation," which was a good enough hymn but for that its first line, and for the fact that it was not really a hymn, but a soliloquy. Like it, the declaration probably suggests to most people that salvation is by good works. So salvation is, partly. Good works, which lay their marks upon us, making our characters, help to save us ; and they help to save the world. But just as they help to save the world, just so is our own individual salvation helped by the good works of others. We are saved not by our own good works alone,—saved from evil and given a higher life. But salvation is also of the grace of God, who is doing his work against evil and fashioning the larger good. If the word " salvation " is the synonym of eternal life, what presumption it is to suppose that the imperfect works of our brief days can effect it for us, especially if to extended duration of living be given blessed intensity of experience. Or as we think of eternal life as present experience of the Holy Spirit, shall we say that this may be granted like wages or a reward for some goodness we do or are, goodness we get out of ourselves, or goodness we manage to keep in ? Whatever we may dream of the virtue and effect-

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iveness of good works, our salvation depends on the direct action of God, the Holy Spirit, as he beats upon us and, whenever we will, flows into us.

There are many other matters of common theology which the sharpening of this doctrine can elucidate, which will occur to you, but which must now be left unconsidered.

Our discussion has turned mainly to our own faith. What shall be said concerning the theology of other Churches?

Roman Catholicism is not concerned with revisions and reconstructions of doctrine. Once delivered from its church councils, its creeds and dogmas are regarded as final decisions and pronouncements of faith. It cannot, or will not, modify or develop them. Its extensions are additions. They may be the logical consequences of fundamental truths, but as such they are not developments of doctrine but simply explicit statements. What was delivered to the saints is not changed, but only defined. The definition produces an additional dogma. Such might also be the case of Protestantism, despite its rejection of the infallibility of the Church, had it retained its idea, its dogma, of the infallibility of the Bible. But that instrument of unfortunate name, the Higher Criticism, has sapped it. The Anglican to-day probably more than the Nonconformist is largely where we are. The demolition of the infallibilities has made him rationalist. When he gives himself full intellectual play, he is known as Modernist. Something must be said of him as such. The Modernist in the Church of England is of all men the man who should win our attention to-day. Whether he ought to remain in the Church of England is a question which is being discussed in the Church of England and outside: it is a question which gets reflection, discussion, and debate even in popular newspapers. I shall not here and now with you consider it, as it were, behind his back: for the frank reason, that I would rather consider it face to face with him. This, because I am compelled to respect him. He is the man who is thinking hardest on the whole religious problem,—harder, let me say, than many of us. He is examining his theological creeds and trying to effect such modifications of their terms as shall render them consistent with modern knowledge; he is examining his Bible and trying to determine what of ancient truth and experience remains as a modern gospel; he is examining modern science and philosophy and trying to find out how their truths transform and translate religious truth; and he is unmistakably alive to the intellectual difficulties and doubts of the common man, and to the moral questions and social problems of the age. He has a great contribution to make to our religious and social life. He is, in his own way, examining, revising, rethinking, reforming, and reconstructing Christianity, that through it, this world of ours may be won for God. He is to us, perhaps not an example of theological non-subscription, but certainly of hard religious rethinking.

Outside the Churches what is religious belief to-day? It lacks anything like definition, but in the rough it seems marvellously like ours. What we speak of as religious indifference goes with it. Apart from it is a sullen agnosticism, which is stoical in its moral temper; it takes the day with no dream of the morrow, unless it gets the inspiration of some social hope. This unshaped belief and this agnosticism we have to meet. We can only do so, we can only be strong to do so, we can only be successful in our doing, as we present not the headlines or the outlines of our faith but its full content as we know it after revision, rethinking and re-affirmation.

We have recently brought our congregations more nearly together than they have ever been and fashioned a scheme for the co-ordination of the labours of our people which encourages great hope for their common work. We have been revising and reconstructing our body, seeing what was needed and bringing bone to its proper bone. The sinews and the flesh have yet to cover the new organisation. Then from all the winds of heaven may the breath of the Holy Spirit breathe into it; and may it stand strong and great to utter the truths of God. May it have the message, the prophecy, that comes of thought, and prayer, and holy communion, and deliver the word of holiness by which alone can come peace and blessedness for the souls of men.

Review.

"REALITIES"

It is one of the paradoxes of the Divine Providence the deep revealings of the Spirit often come from man's experiences of suffering and trial, as it is in the hours of darkness that the stars are led forth by their hosts and crowd the sky with unearthly beauty. And in this age the eager cry that is rising everywhere to get back to realities, the desire to find the Reality, has been forced from men's hearts by all the dire disaster, disillusionment, and difficulty which War

and its aftermath have thrust upon us. In an easy age it may be possible to be content with shams and trivialities, but the task which confronts the present is to build up a new order of ideals and values out of the wreck of the old, to fashion a new heaven and a new earth out of chaos.

In these circumstances thought gains a fresh importance and life an unprecedented seriousness, while the time calls for radical criticism as one condition of sound reconstruction. It is to this task Dr. Mellone has addressed himself in the Booklet before us* and there are few minds better qualified for the task by culture, insight, and social sympathy. His summary of the present state in theology, church and society, and his suggestion as to the way out ought to be widely read by learned or unlearned, as it guides us on to profound principles by plain paths, and for this reason we regret that the price is 2/-. It ought to have been half that, to bring it within the reach of all serious minded people, and especially as it is published in paper covers.

There are three Chapters. The first sets forth the condition of Organised Christianity to-day, dealing with the main movements and clash of thought in Anglicanism and in Non-conformity, with special reference to the history of the Prayer Book controversy. That history can be resumed as to its essence under the conflict between the principles of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, and within Protestantism itself as a battle between the Religion of Authority and Tradition, as opposed to that of Freedom and the Spirit. "Protestantism, after trying for four centuries to hold both these types of religion at the same time, is discovering that the thing is impossible, and is beginning to rally its forces co-operatively on the basis of spiritual freedom." He describes the situation in the Church of England as "Comprehension Covering Chaos" and is evidently with the Constitutionalists who hold that the Church has neither legal nor moral right to claim full spiritual liberty while it remains a State establishment, and that the House of Commons in rejecting the New Book expressed the general attitude of the nation, for "the people of Great Britain are fundamentally Protestant and their religious views are governed by Protestant principles." We agree that, rightly or wrongly, it was on the issue of the Reformation Settlement that the opposition gave its vote. Dr. Mellone might have made more of the fact that the modernism which is a strong element in the floating religion of the population receives but the scantiest consideration in the Revised Book, as Dr. Barnes has emphasised.

Chapter II. is concerned with the World's Danger and the World's Need," treated in five divisions each of which discusses an Idol, e.g., False Orthodoxy, False Nationalism, Class Consciousness. Here the prophetic influence and strain, characteristic of the author's mind, are well revealed and the Chapter is very valuable for the judgments on social facts and issues of a reflective and sympathetic personality. He is deeply impressed with the failure of the Church to make its ideals prevail in modern history and life. "The impotence of the Church is an astounding fact in the modern world." It is due partly to the error of substituting the subtleties of a religion **about** Jesus for the religion of Jesus. Science however can bring no human salvation, for its contribution to progress depends entirely on the ethical purposes and politics to which the immense powers it has liberated are made subservient. The Church, moreover, does not exist to depress the longings or crush the discontents of the masses, but to direct them to the right ends by "purifying and deepening the public conscience" rather than by articulating definite schemes and programmes. Christianity must become ethicised and socialised in restoring the things of real importance to the first place in its mission to the world.

This is expounded in the third and last Chapter on "Christianity in its simplest and most intelligible form," which gives full play to Dr. Mellone's plea that Religion must get behind irreverences and trivialities to the essential realities. This is the vision of a Church which has given up the impossible attempt at reunion on the basis of Authority and Ancient Creeds to become inwardly united and truly Catholic on the foundation of the few great spiritual Principles of the Christian message, as announced by Jesus, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, originally concerned and permanently confirmed by the exercise of national and spiritual freedom.

This vision and principle our author finds to be the true meaning and inspiration of Unitarian Christianity, which must be saved from the anticlimax of lapsing into the mere **protest** of a **Sect,** or a **formless freedom,** or a jumble of incoherent opinions and fads, and become the organised disciplined embodiment of the mighty human struggle for a vital religion with the Father-

*"Back to Realities," by Sydney Herbert Mellone, M.A., D.SC., Constable & Co., 2/- net, 99 pp.

hood, Purpose and Glory of God as its centre and the Brotherhood of all mankind of every class and clime and nationality within its all-embracing family-circle.

We believe this grand Catholic conception represents the true nature and meaning of the Unitarian Faith and Movement, its roots deep-thrust into the Divine stratum of humanity and its branches rising upward to the heavens, for the healing of nations.

Our only criticism is that Dr. Mellone has a tendency to weaken his statement of conclusions by making it indirect or in the form of a question, here and there. And we should have preferred less quotations and more of himself. Especially in Chapter I., but it is a timely contribution to current problems, of real value. R. N. C.

Reports.

Belfast : All Souls' Church.—Sunday School Excursion. The excursion to Tyrella and Rathmullin on Saturday, June 23rd, was an unqualified success. The number participating was much smaller than usual, only about 40 children and adults making the journey, but the outing was one of the most enjoyable the school has ever had. After a long day, spent chiefly on the shore playing games and running races, the tired but happy party reached Belfast at 9-45 p.m. On the return journey a halt was made at Downpatrick and visits paid to the Non-Subscribing Church, the Cathedral and the grave of St. Patrick. As in previous years, the arrangements were in the hands of Miss A. Montgomery, who we have to thank once again for a most enjoyable excursion. To Miss Martin, Miss Carmichael and Miss Montgomery we are indebted for preparing and serving an excellent lunch and tea, to which a hungry crowd did full justice. We are also greatly indebted to the Rev. V. A. Callow, who, no doubt at much inconvenience to himself, made arrangements for the party to be comfortably accommodated at Rathmullin

Downpatrick.—The First Presbyterian Non-Subscribing Sunday School's Flower Service on Sunday morning was very beautiful. A goodly congregation included the local company of the Boys' Brigade. They were welcomed by Rev. V. A. Callow, who at the same time acknowledged the consistent kindness towards the church of members of other Protestant denominations. He then discoursed eloquently on the power of emotion in the affairs of life. Some 70 choice bouquets were laid on a central stand by the children, as a midsummer offering ; also, a large number of eggs, all of which were afterwards sent to the infirmary. Six of the senior boys took up the offertory.

Killinchy.—The Sunday School Anniversary and Flower Services were held on Sunday, June 24th. The Morning Service was held at noon and the Evening at 7-30. The minister officiated at both services and his discourses had reference to the importance of the work of the Sunday School and the definite instruction of the young. Special hymns were sung at both services. The collections were on behalf of the funds of the Sunday School. We are able to report that they were well up to the average. On the following Saturday, June 30th, teachers and scholars journeyed by motor bus to Ringhaddy, on the shores of Strangford Lough, a very beautiful spot where there is a ruin of an old Norman Castle. The day was very showery and to that extent the afternoon proved a damp one ; but the number of young lives in our party made light of the weather conditions and enjoyed themselves in spite of climatic disadvantage. The loan of a barn kindly lent for the occasion made it easy and comfortable to partake of refreshments to which all present young and old, did ample justice. The ride home late in the evening was enjoyable and thus terminated another Sunday School excursion.

Larne and Kilwaughter.—On Tuesday, 3rd July, the young folk of the Sunday Schools accompanied by a goodly number of their elders, set out on their Annual Excursion. The scene at the Meeting House gates, where we awaited the arrival of the two conveyances from Kilwaughter, was quite a gay one—our pipers playing enlivening airs, and the children showing every sign of their pleasure and excitement at being once again on holiday. The time for departing came at last, and we mustered six chars-a-banc, seating, not according to the numbers allowed by law in each vehicle, but according to our capacity for accommodation ! And such a shouting, cheering, singing assembly as would have destroyed the reserve of the most hardened misanthrope. Hillmount, near Drains Bay, was our destination—a place not far distant from Larne—and here, after one sharp shower, the weather clerk favoured us with the remaining hours in sunshine and warmth. Here too, the young folk found plenty of room and occasion for various forms of sport, while those of " riper years " looked on and enjoyed a friendly talk. Needless to add, perhaps, that healthy

appetites were also discovered, and Mrs. Axon, who had undertaken to provide for us, is to be commended for her liberal estimate of our requirements as well as for her excellent variety and quality of provision. About half past seven we began to make the journey home, and now indeed also rain began to fall; but we had finished our sports, and another Annual Excursion could rightly be acclaimed successful.

Mountpottinger.—The Annual Floral Services were held on July 1st, the preacher in the morning and evening being Rev. G. J. Slipper (Newry). At the Children's Service in the afternoon, we were fortunate in having Rev. R. Nicol Cross, M.A., of First Church, Rosemary Street, as preacher, and his discourse proved of much interest to both the children and their elders. Unfortunately it was raining heavily when the people should have been leaving their homes a fact which undoubtedly had its effect on the attendance, surprisingly good though this was under all circumstances. One feature of the service was the rendering of the anthem "Consider the Lilies," in which the solo portion was taken by Nellie Hay, the refrain being sung by the scholars. The church was tastefully decorated, this work being undertaken by members of the Women's League. The Sunday School Excursion took place on Saturday, June 30th, the selected spot being Groomsport. A new feature this year was that none of the party left till 2 p.m., about which hour three well-filled motor charas-a-banc set out. Fortunately the afternoon kept fine save for two or three showers which were soon over. Under the guidance of Miss L. Watters and H. Beattie, races were run for which prizes had been provided by subscriptions from the Congregation. After an ample tea, which was served at Ellis' Café, the party in different groups explored the village and neighbourhood. The return journey was made via Newtownards over a portion of the route selected for the Motor Race in August and Mountpottinger was reached about 9-30 p.m. after an enjoyable outing. The whole arrangements were admirably carried out by Mr. L. Watters, the Honorary Treasurer of the Sunday School.

Holywood.—The members of the Sewing Circle connected with the First Presbyterian Congregation, Holywood, had a very happy excursion to Islandmagee on Wednesday, July 4th, when they were the guests of their President, Mrs. William Patterson, at her holiday residence, at Ferris Bay. The party, accompanied by Mr. Patterson, Mr. R. Steele, and Rev. E. Lockett, travelled by reserved saloon carriage to Larne, whence they crossed by the ferry to the Island, where they were met by Mrs. Patterson and friends. Notwithstanding showery weather, a pleasant ramble to Brown's Bay and over the hills was had in the afternoon. Owing to rain in the evening, the visitors were conveyed by motor to Ballycarry Station, where they met the train for Belfast. The members greatly appreciate the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Patterson.

Obituary.

Mr. Samuel Maltman, Killinchy.

The Congregation of Killinchy suffered one of the greatest losses it has recently sustained in the death of Samuel Maltman, of Ballymorran, Killinchy, which took place on Friday, June 1st, at the comparatively early age of 45 years. He had been in apparently good health and continued his daily avocation regularly as a rural postman until a week previously. He was greatly respected by a wide circle of friends who relied on his fidelity to an unusual extent, for he was ever of an obliging disposition and ready at all times to do his part in the sphere of life in which he was placed. He will be missed most of all in our church, where he was ever a most consistent worshipper, hardly ever missing a Sunday except when absence was unavoidable. He was ever ready with a helping hand in all activities calculated to bring animation and life into our religious connection. The whole countryside received the news of his demise as a great surprise as to all outward appearance he was in robust health. Much sympathy is felt for his two brothers, one older and the other younger than himself. May they have the consolation of knowing that their brother did his part worthily in love while he lived and that his memory is held in kind remembrance. His funeral was on Sunday, June 3rd. The remains were removed to the New Meeting House Green, Killinchy, in the presence of a large concourse of friends and neighbours from near and far. The Rev. D. J. Williams officiated in the home and at the graveside

N.B.—*We regret that space does not permit the inclusion in this issue of an important obituary notice. It will however appear next month. Several other items are unavoidably held over.*—EDITOR.

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